Education and Social Progress? 
Challenges to the IPSP Chapter on Education

Lorenz Lassnigg  
(lassnigg@ihs.ac.at: www.equi.at)  
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“What’s next: disruptive/collaborative economy or business as usual ”  

agenda

- education chapter: contributors, cornerstones and main messages
- social progress in IPSP, values and principles
- challenges, questions to chapter
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International Panel on Social Progress

IPSP, godfathers/mothers, e.g., Amartya, Sen. Helga Nowotny, Nancy Fraser

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IPSP education chapter (ch19), contributors, core group

- Christiane Spiel  ed.psychologist  Austria, EU
- Barbara Schober  ed.psychologist  Austria, EU
- Marius Busemeyer  polit.scientist,  Germany, EU
- Lorenz Lassnigg  soc.sc.ed.researcher  Austria, EU
- Michele Schweisfurth  comparative ed.  Scotland / int.
- Gili Drori  sociologist, org.th  Israel / (US)
- Simon Schwartzman  sociologist, h.e  Brazil, Lat.Am
- Nico Cloete  h.e. researcher  South Africa
- Suman Verma  ed.psychologist  India, Asia

BIAS: European ('Germanic'), high-middle-income-countries, BRICS

NOT REPRESENTED

- young researchers
- economics, global/int.ed.policy, philosophy, admin.science
- low-income and post.socialist countries; wider African, Asian regions, Oceania, US
education chapter, overview

- cornerstones, conceptual
  - deliberate focus on formal education
  - policy orientation for broad audience
  - generalised argument, 'main trends'

- basic understanding of education and social progress
  - education as part of culture (not further defined)
  - expansion of formal education endemic aspect of social progress, emergent increasingly complex structures (description)
  - contribution of education to social progress broken down to four purposes: humanistic, civic, economic, equality/justice to be considered by politics in a balanced way (discussion main part)
  - focus on two policy dimensions: a. pedagogy/curriculum, b. governance
  - policy recommendations (no silver bullet)
    Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
    early education
    school quality
    educators
    h.e. and VET, inclusive roles and social relevance
    digitalisation

education chapter, some specifications, difficulties, debates

- about purposes
  - concept of purposes, goals? How relate to concept of social progress?
  - how to weigh the economic purpose against the others?
  - how to define the humanistic purpose, skip it?
  - equality/justice separate purpose, or subsumed to others?
  - preserving environment additional purpose or to be subsumed (where)?

- addressed policy dimensions
  - a. pedagogy/curriculum/(assessment)
    pedagogy: learner centred education (LCE)
    curriculum: core curriculum, competences
    assessment: standards and flexibility
  - b. governance (mainly descriptive)
    public support;
    decentralisation;
    privatisation;
    research-informed policy;
    global governance
education chapter, messages, recommendations

- not really new points, rather attempt towards 'agenda setting': topics proposed that should be selected for priority…
  - …however, not very much specified in relation to mainstream or hegemonic political proposals…(assessment of prevailing politics missing)
  - …neither in relation to the overall IPSP proposals (see below)
  - …resources-issues not emphasised (enormous global disparities)

- main message: humanistic and civic purposes should be weighted more than / at least as much as / the economic ones…
  - …economic growth will not automatically improve all other aspects of progress/wellbeing, education plays a mediating role (culturalist view)
  - …economic indicators/role of education for development disputed among contributors (e.g., political role of returns measures?, priorities for certain sectors/institutions of education, basic-VET-h.e.?)

- to some extent qualifying mainstream/hegemonic strategies
  - flexible standards and assessment, critical to privatisation (regulating market)

- focus on teacher professionalisation and learner centred education

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education chapter, overview and challenges

- cornerstones, conceptual
  - deliberate focus on formal education
  - policy orientation for broad audience
  - generalised argument, 'main trends'

- basic understanding of education
  - education as part of culture (not further specified)
  - expansion of formal education endangers emergent increasingly complex structures
  - contribution of education to social progress
  - humanistic, civic, economic, equal opportunities to be considered by politics in a balanced manner
  - focus on two policy dimensions: a.
    - policy recommendations (no silver bullet)
      - SDGs
      - early education
      - school quality
      - educators
      - h.e. and VET, inclusive roles and social digitalisation

- challenges
  - impact of context, informal ed.
  - analytic approach, pol.limitations
  - diversity of global conditions

  - education as an instrument vs. societal field/sector
    (spanning state and civil society)

  - concept of social progress, educational implications
    (deliberate movement instead of instrument, contextualisation)

  - preserving environment as a fifth purpose

  - assessment of hegemonic strategies/proposals vis-a-vis understanding of social progress
    (alternatives to GERM: Global Educational Reform Movement)
social progress in IPSP, a compass

- **values** and **principles** as basic elements for defining and assessing social progress

- **a. seven (basic, irreducible) values, basis for evaluation:**
  - well-being, freedom, non-alienation, solidarity, esteem/recognition, cultural goods, environmental values

- **b. principles, should give direction, rather (complex) dimensions than clear listing:**
  - **justice** (reparative, criminal, social-distributive)
  - **basic rights** (problems of threshold, weighing, entitlement)
  - **distribution** (criteria/conception of fairness; entities: liberties, welfare, resources)
  - problem: different/competing conceptions of principles, and ways of relating the principles to each other (libertarianism, egalitarianism[s], prioritanism, utilitarianism…)
  - basic issue for education: **equality of opportunity**, what does it mean? however, contested issue: how to define/understand? refers to values-principles…
social progress in IPSP, a compass

- values and principles stylised

VALUES

+solidarity
+cultural goods
+non-alienation
+well-being
+freedom
+environmental values
+esteem/recognition

PRINCIPLES (criteria for assessment)

JUSTICE
BASIC RIGHTS
DISTRIBUTION

social progress in IPSP, a compass

- ...main points: reflexivity...

1. Education is related to all values of social progress, however, in political terms in complex ways: no kind of unified strategy for social progress is possible, the situation must be assessed concretely according to the values, based on criteria

2. Education is complex in many ways (structure, values and interests, practices), so politics will always be contested and conflict-loaden; politics for social progress must evolve as a struggling movement of interested actors within this complex field (opposed to an understanding of instrumentalist policies)...

3. ...therefore a clear understanding of the values and principles among the proponents of social progress is a necessary condition (underlined by the key role of education in societal discourse, that is in fact pushed down by instrumentalist policies)
CHAPTER
Four purposes (weakly defined, not related to IPSP concept):
- …values and principles stylised

HUMANISTIC
human virtues, enlightenment
science/technology
humanities
responsibility
environment

CIVIC/ DEMOCRATIC
content & practice
active citizens in complex society

ECONOMIC/ PRODUCTIVE
direct skills
wider competences

EQUITY/JUSTICE
mobility & inclusion vs.
divisions & inequalities
antidiscrimination,

JUSTICE
mobility & inclusion vs.
divisions & inequalities
antidiscrimination,

VALUES
+cultural goods +environmental values
+non-alienation +esteem/recognition
+well-being +freedom
+solidarity

BASIC RIGHTS

DISTRIBUTION

PRINCIPLES
criteria for assessment:

CHAPTER
Simple understanding of equality of opportunity in terms of access, no
discussion of equity vs. equality, threshold etc.
social progress in IPSP, four purposes related to the values

- **Humanistic virtues** for human development
  
  To *save the environment and other species* against the overuse of the planetary resources must be pushed as a main dimension of humanistic development. Furthering humanist virtues need access to the available *cultural goods* and are closely related to the values of *non-alienation* and to giving and receiving personal or group *recognition*.

- **Enhancement of civic life and political participation** in a democratic polity
  
  The enhancement of civic life appears most closely related to the values of *solidarity* and *freedom*.

- **The third contribution is economic productivity**
  
  The economic contribution of education is clearly related to the value of *well-being*, whereby a main current debate concerns the relationship between the material aspects of well-being (GDP growth and distribution) and the broader aspects concerning *esteem* and *recognition*.

- **The fourth contribution is furthering of social equity and justice**
  
  Furthering social equity and justice concerns the realization of *all basic values of social progress*, and *need an understanding of the principles of justice* to be applied. In particular in relation to public education, a deliberation about the threshold up to which the public must secure universal equal access is necessary.
...back to challenges

- ...why are politics/policies towards education so difficult, contradictory, and contested? main aspects of current politics/policies: economic rationality
  - privatisation, delegitimation the public & state
  - incentives/sanctions based
  - ASSESSMENT/ASSESSMENT/ASSESSMENT

- ...main point: ‘education is special’, this is not sufficiently considered!
  
  cannot easily subsumed under other concepts/sectors, e.g., production, capital, currency, welfare, poverty…
  even if it carries communalities with them

  this must be considered in politics and policies, and related proposals…

- ...political discourses always take only certain aspects out, and often put them against others…
  - in particular fight against teachers…
...back to challenges

- cornerstones, conceptual
  - deliberate focus on formal education
  - policy orientation for broad audience
  - generalised argument, 'main trends'
- basic understanding of education
  - education as part of culture (not further defined)
  - expansion of formal education endemic aspect of social progress, emergent increasingly complex structures (description)
  - contribution of education to social progress humanistic, civic, economic, equal to be considered by politics in a balanced way
  - focus on two policy dimensions: a.
    - policy recommendations (no silver SDGs early education school quality educators h.e. and VET, inclusive roles and social digitalisation
  - education as an instrument vs. societal field/sector (spanning state and civil society)
  - concept of social progress, educational implications (deliberate movement instead of instrument, contextualisation)
  - preserving environment as a fifth purpose
  - assessment of hegemonic strategies/proposals vis-a-vis understanding of social progress (alternatives to GERM: Global Educational Reform Movement)

5 challenges

- (1) input side: embeddedness of formal education into context, informal learning/education (more) important, mostly not considered in political discourse
- (2) output side: political proposals focus on outcomes (economic, social, political) that cannot directly be influenced by (formal) education
  education in other IPSP chapters…
- (3) considering global diversity in social progress (e.g. role of market in different regimes; resources disparities and priorities)
- (4) 'ontology' of education: perceiving as instrument or as a complex societal field/sector?
  outcome orientation, who should take instrument; soc.pr. as a movement
- (5) taking position vis-a-vis the hegemonic/mainstream political proposals, 'Education Gospel' and GERM
  standardization/outcome orientation; core subjects; easy/low-risk teaching; NPM; test-based accountability
challenges 1
impact of context and of informal education

- politics/policies (must) focus on formal (state provided/supported) education, however, education/learning is a universal activity, that goes on all the time informally, and main parts are also institutionalised in various forms in civil society,

- thus, the practices of formal education always must play together with these contextual and informal practices, and, importantly, the impact of the formal practices is – and cannot be – really known
  - it also does not make sense to isolate them artificially, because the contextual processes will persist

- as a consequence, formal education is necessarily reduced to an intention (Niklas Luhmann), that can play out in various ways, that are in turn countered in various ways…

- professionals must work at the edge with context and informal processes, micro processes beyond policies are essential for impact

challenges 2
analytic approach vs. 'another policy strategy'

- education is a key object of politics, however, without much success

- it is difficult to accept for the political community, and related forces/actors that it/they cannot sufficiently control such important practices, so they constantly try to find ways to get grip of these processes

- this is reinforced by the high importance of education for societal development that is theorised and proved in various ways

- so another contextual issue arises, as educational interventions have effects beyond their immediate reach of supporting learning, today often named outcomes (economic, political, sociological, etc.)
  - these outcomes are indirect, and are always produced in interaction with actors/mechanisms/fields outside of education (enterprises, social structures, political parties, etc.)

- so paradoxically, politics/policies ask from education, or try to impose, impacts that cannot be directly influenced by it
  - other IPSP-chapters more than 100 pages referring to aspects of education
occurrence of education related terms in other IPSP chapters

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*total also includes human capital: 71 hits

- 'education' or related terms (train, learn, skill, educat) totally occur more often in other chapters compared to education chapter

challenges 3
diversity of global conditions

- the main picture of educational development is the spread and expansion of formal education as enlightening the world in Western ways, thus supporting capitalism and democracy globally, etc.
  - this was the scientific concept of progress by modernising traditional societies invented by (US) Sociology in the last century

- to evaluate the global conditions against the IPSP values and principles remains a task to be done

- looking at available political proposals and projects, it seems not easy to escape of this Western or Eurocentric thinking
  - maybe it holds a serious evaluation, I have not found one, that would go beyond the global application of Western educational standards
challenges 4
education as instrument vs. societal field/sector

- in particular from the outcome-related perspective education appears as an instrumental device for providing the desired outcomes, however, without having sufficient power to do this...

- interestingly, an instrumental view is also often taken from the educationalists’ side
  - within the chapter there were different views; however, not really solved, so there is no explicit common ‘ontology’ of education taken in the chapter

- education is an too complex entity to be taken by someone as an instrument (who should this be?), but it is a contested field in society, in which several actors (try to) interfere

- so social progress can be taken up as an orientation to fight for from actors within the field, who should be as clear as possible about what they want to achieve
  - recommendations to policy makers about providing social progress is in this view a wrong approach

challenges 5
assessment of hegemonic strategies/proposals

- a kind of global education strategy has emerged, that includes first the ‘EDUCATION GOSPEL’ (education is key to change everything), and second a set of policy instruments that have been termed GERM (Global Education Reform Movement), including:
  - standardization of education, following outcomes-based education reform
  - focus on core subjects in school, literacy and numeracy, eventually science
  - search for low-risk ways to reach learning goals
  - use of corporate management models for improvement
  - test-based accountability policies for schools
  
- in some way or another, these instruments are applied, seemingly ‘evidence-based’, however, increasingly research shows that these instruments do not work, and counter-movements are arising
  - a main thrust of these instruments is that they pave the way for privatisation

- in terms of the (preliminary) IPSP conclusions a main path for social progress can be a second great transformation that tries to put the market in its sustainable limits,
  - and this seems clearly not the case with GERM
…conclusion

- ...main points: reflexivity...

1. Education is related to all values of social progress, however, in political terms in complex ways: no kind of unified strategy for social progress is possible, the situation must be assessed concretely according to the values, based on criteria.

2. Education is complex in many ways (structure, values and interests, practices), so politics will always be contested and conflict-loaden; politics for social progress must evolve as a struggling movement of interested actors within this complex field (opposed to an understanding of instrumentalist policies).

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Material

http://www.equi.at/de/team/Lorenz+Lassnigg